1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8

As pregnancy progresses, the rules multiply: both parents are prohibited from eating the flesh of parrots, wild doves, sariemas, and armadilloes; and they must not kill a snake if they encounter one. The father must not singe a young paca at the fire lest there be a miscarriage, and he must not have sexual relations with either his wife or other women.

Deliberate abortion seems very rare; during the whole of my stay no case came to my notice. However, I was told that occasionally women deserted by their husbands used abortives—the decoction of the scraped bark of the pau candeia tree (*Cassia* sp.) or the malodorous shoot of an undetermined species. On the other hand, unintentional abortion often results, as I was able to note in several cases exclusively from the pregnant woman's insistence on staggering home like others of her sex under an overloaded basket of cultivated fruits, a pleasure no Indian woman lightly renounces. Although the carrying basket is suspended from a forehead band (pl. 5, *b*), the load also rests heavily on the small of the back, with the consequences noted.

DELIVERY

As the period of delivery approaches, the husband partitions off the platform bed with mats, for normally parturition takes place in the dwelling. Further, he plaits a number of anajá-grass mats for bedding. No male must witness the delivery. Though the husband is allowed to remain in the partitioned space—as a rule he does not avail himself of this privilege—he must not look at his wife, for that would render the birth more difficult. An elderly matrilineal kinswoman assists, there being no special midwives.

In difficult cases the crushed seeds of cantaloupes (post-Columbian!) are rubbed into the small of the mother's back. Another means of relief is for the husband to walk outside round the house—a usage shared with the Apinayé and the Kaingang. A young husband is often deeply affected by the event. As a primipara, Pụtyapére had an exceedingly lengthy and painful delivery. Her husband, after having walked outside around the house several times, sat fidgeting on a racing log before the door. Beside him sat two of his as yet unmarried kwụ'nõ in sheepish embarrassment. As I passed by, the expectant father hailed me and looked at me in so supplicating a fashion that I tried to soothe him as best I could.

The woman in attendance ligatures the navel string with a cotton cord and cuts it with an iron knife, whose aboriginal equivalent the Indians were unable to tell me about. On the cut they smear first urucú, then the juice of the araçá bark. The afterbirth, mekéti, is buried in a corner of the house. One must not throw away the anajá mats on which the delivery has taken place and which are changed as soon as soiled. The delivered woman's mother rolls them up and squeezes them into the fork of a tree in the steppe beyond the house, at the same time praying to the sun for protection of the infant from harm: "kedti, napáre ipụm, hompú apúi kačun nãre!" The mats are left to be destroyed by the next steppe fire.

The pelvic bones are pressed together after birth by having the woman lie on her side on the platform bed, her husband seating himself on her hip.

THE NEWBORN INFANT

Having never seen a single case of manifest bodily defect among about three hundred Rąmkõ'kamekra, I at first suspected them of killing crippled infants at birth, but any such practice was expressly denied.

The woman who assists at birth cleanses the infant's mouth with her finger, washes it, and paints it with urucú; the mother is taken behind the house and

1: Nimuendajú 8-6 (1929-1936) 1946 SCS Timbira SCS

wakukrá iykapeána." That is, approximately: "Grandfather! Give me a child so that I may be able to eat with him." Then the suppliant spreads the urucú on the inside of her thighs.

Kentapí did not take that much trouble. One morning she was sitting at home against the wall, eating some food from a gourd bowl, while the sun was shining in at the door, directly in front of her feet. She set down her bowl, stretched out both palms horizontally toward the sun, like a begging child, and without getting up said in a low tone: "pa'pám! iymã iykra ṅoṅgõ! pa'pám iykaprẽ', marwa'té iykrí napá. Ka, iykaprẽne iymã iykrareṅoṅgõ, vamẽ iypa!" ("Our Father! Give me a child! Our Father, take pity on me, I am sitting here alone, eating. You, pity me, give me a child to eat with me!") On my request she subsequently repeated the words. "I wonder whether he will listen to your prayer?" I asked. "Surely," she answered, "look at Iromkré [Kentapí's younger sister], she also invoked him and is already pregnant." However, it was three years before Kentapí's prayer was fulfilled.

It is a striking fact that the girls of this tribe never have children before, and only several years after, marriage. This is regarded as normal by the Indians themselves, and the above-mentioned Iromkré, who conceived immediately after marriage, was considered exceptional. She was fifteen as a primipara, and her mother told me that she was really too young to bear children. Abortives, if used at all, are exceptional; nor, in my opinion, can the means employed to prevent menstruation be responsible for the lateness of pregnancy in the light of the earliness of sexual intercourse. For this purpose a girl will seat herself on a steppe tree the Neobrazilians call pau pombo (*Tapirira* sp.?) or drink the infusion of the scraped bark of pau candeia (*Cassia* sp.), which is also considered an abortive.

In any case Snethlage probably underestimates the age of mothers in setting that of Ramkõ'kamekra girls who already had a child at barely twelve;[88] or, possibly the child he had in mind was not the offspring of the girl with her. The youngest mother I saw was certainly Iromkré, whose age was between fourteen and fifteen.

OLD AGE

Old people are esteemed; a junior would not venture to address them by name as though they were of his own age, but will always apply a kinship term, calling them kedti or tỵ'ire (grandparent) even if there is no blood relationship. Children and young people never try to converse with their elders unsolicited; even when they have to make some communication to them, they usually remain standing before them in silence until asked to speak. In meeting old people on a narrow path, the younger ones make way to let them pass. I have never heard the frailty of old age derided or mocked. Old Krithỵ', though already hard of hearing and very myopic, would insist on occasionally going to the creek five to six kilometers beyond the village to try his luck as an angler. On these trips he went astray several times on the numerous trails crisscrossing the steppe and was unable to find his way home. Then his grandsons or great-nephews trotted in his wake like hunting-dogs and jubilantly led him back by the hand.

I have pointed out (p. 94) that after a period of some forty years of athletic life all men of an age class ceremonially and automatically drop out of the sports activities to enter the council, which constitutes the real governing body of the tribe since the chiefs undertake nothing without their advice. Further, I have explained by many illustrations that after any ceremonial retreat a person must present himself to this assemblage before being reckoned a full-fledged member of society again.

[88] Snethlage, Reise, 465.